

Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet - 14

Introduction: Verses 1 and 2 describe for us the repetition of the command for Jonah to go and preach to the city of Nineveh. **Verses 3 and 4** describe Jonah's obedience as he enters into the city and preaches the message that God gives him.

We concluded last week looking at Jonah's obedience to the command God gave him. **In verse 2**, we see the command and it states, *"Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."* **Verse 3** then tells us that Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh.

Last week we emphasized this matter of obedience. *We must carry out of the Lord's instructions according to God's ways.*

God commanded Jonah to use the same method that has been in use down through the ages; preaching. (Heralding His Word)

One of the very earliest records of this is in **Jude verses 14,15**.

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Noah proclaimed God's Word.

I Peter 2:5 tells us that [God] *"...spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;"*

And on down the line, we will find in the Scriptures that God continues to use the *"foolishness of preaching..."*

Not only are we to preach, but I would like to emphasize this point; we are to preach His Word.

We are to herald the Word of God.

II Timothy 4:2 states, *“2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”*

Isaiah the prophet, who gave His life for serving the Lord, said it this way in **Isaiah 21:10**

“10 O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: That which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Have I declared unto you.”

We might rightly ask the question:

How important is us to herald the truth in this generation? Some might say, “Shouldn't we come up with some other method, some other way?” The answer is no.

We do not discover the specifics of the message given to Jonah until we arrive in **verse 4**. The Bible says in **verse 4**, *“...and he [Jonah] cried and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”*

This is a hard message to preach. This is most certainly a message of condemnation.

Back in **verse two**, we have also described for us something particular about this city. God calls Nineveh a great city.

Jonah 1:2 we find the same expression, *“that great city.”*

Jonah 4:11 we again find that the Lord calls this a great city.

Jonah 3:3 we see Nineveh is described as an exceeding great city.

What are we to understand about this?

1. Nineveh was great in its size. God described it as such. We have the phrase “three days journey” to emphasize this.
2. Nineveh was great in wickedness. Remember in Jonah chapter 1 that the Lord describes these people in this city as being great in wickedness. (**Jonah 1:2**)
3. Nineveh was in great need. We will see at the end of Jonah this point given attention to by God. Because of the size of this city and the abounding wickedness, there was a great need that existed there.

Think about the immensity of this task given to Jonah by God. We can draw some parallels to the day in which we live. It is an immense task that has been given to local churches, to preach the Gospel to every creature. **(Mark 16:15)**

Just in our area alone statistically, there are 137,000 people in the city of Hampton (2020 - Census.gov). In Newport News, there are approx. 186,000 people (2020 - Census.gov) What a tremendous amount of people that need to hear the Gospel!

I want you to notice that Jonah **spoke with great passion**. The Bible says, he didn't just speak but he preached or cried unto them.

Jonah was serious about what he was saying. This leads us really to examine ourselves in delivering God's message to this World. Are we earnest about it?

Secondly, I want you to see that the message that God gave for Jonah was plain. Interestingly, the LORD chose to use the amount of time as 40. When we go back and look at the Scriptures we find that particular number associated with many events.

Here are the references:

- (1) The catastrophic worldwide flood. **Genesis 7:4; Genesis 7:12**
- (2) Issac's choice of a wife at the age of 40 as opposed to Esau's choice of a wife at the age of 40. **Genesis 25:20; Genesis 26:34**
- (3) Moses Life is three distinct 40-year segments
- (4) The Children of Israel were fed for forty years before they came to the borders of the Promised Land. **Exodus 16:35**
- (5) Moses on the Mountain with God to receive the Law. **Exodus 24:18**
- (6) Moses on the Mountain with God to receive the Law a second time. **Deuteronomy 9:25; Deuteronomy 10:10**
- (7) The twelve spies spy out the land. (Just as a side note, Caleb was 40 years old when he went in to spy out the land. He was one of two that gave a favorable report.) **Numbers 13:25**
- (8) The judgment was rendered by God because they did not obey the Lord and enter into the land. **Numbers 14:33-34; Number 32:13; Deuteronomy 2:7; Deuteronomy 8:2**
- (9) Forty stripes are only allowed in punishment. **Deuteronomy 25:3**
- (10) Othniel's judgeship and the Israelite's decision return to evil. **Judges 3:11-12**
- (11) Deborah and Barak's victory at the hand of Jael and Israel's decision return to evil. **Judges 5:31-6:1**
- (12) The great victory of Gideon, the snare of Gideon's Ephod. **Judges 8:27-28**

- (13) 40 Years in the hand of the Philistines. **Judges 13:1**
- (14) Eli judged Israel for 40 years and was judged by God. **I Samuel 4:18**
- (15) Goliath taunted the Israelites for 40 days. **I Samuel 17:16**
- (16) First three kings reigned 40 years Saul (**Acts 13:21**), David (**I Kings 2:11**), and Solomon (**I Kings 11:42**)
- (17) Elijah's meeting with God in Horeb. **I Kings 19:8**
- (18) Joash's reign as king, started well but ended not so well. **II Kings 12:1; II Chronicles 24:17-18**; See also **II Chronicles 24**
- (19) Ezekiel's commanded sign and Judah's judgment. **Ezekiel 4:6**
- (20) Judgement upon Egypt. **Ezekiel 29:11; Ezekiel 29:12,13**
- (21) The 40th book of the Bible is the book of Matthew the 1st Gospel record.
- (22) The fasting and temptation of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Luke 4:2**
- (23) The Lord's time with the disciples after the resurrection before the ascension. **Acts 1:3**
- (24) Stephen's preaching in **Acts 7** referencing the above events of Israel

Though this message was one of judgment it was a message that was full of the grace of God. You might be thinking, how in the world do you get that? Let's think biblically:

Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Proverbs 1:23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

Proverbs 5:11-13 "11 And thou mourn at the last, When thy flesh and thy body are consumed, 12 And say, **How have I hated instruction, And my heart despised reproof;** 13 And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, Nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!"

II Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"

Many might say, "I don't want to hear those kinds of messages. They are hard sayings."

"Few people today would concede that Jonah's message was gracious. If he were their pastor, they would march into his office and accuse him of preaching unkind, unloving, mean, harsh, and crude sermons. But Jonah's sermon was a sermon of grace, for God's grace was manifested throughout his sermon. His sermon was a warning. Nineveh heeded that warning and was spared judgment. If there had been no warning, then there would have been no repentance." - John Butler

Thank the Lord for His direct plain Holy Word and the preaching of it!